

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8171

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0304

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, DM, US, UN

SUBJ: MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ALLADAYE

REF (A) COTONOU 256, (B) COTONOU 273,

SUMMARY: FORNMIN CONVOKED CHARGE 17 FEB. IN SHARP CONTRAST TO RECENT SESSIONS WITH AMB, MEETING WAS MARKED BY EXTREME CORDIALITY. IMMEDIATE RECALL OF AMB AND FIRM PROTEST IN WASHINGTON HAS SHAKEN GPRB. MIN IS NOW TRYING TO COVER UP MIS-TREATMENT OF AMB AND MEND RELATIONSHIPS. HE OFFERED PROMISE OF MODIFICATION OF BENIN POSTURE AT UN. END SUMMARY

1. LATE AFTRNOON 17 FEB FORNMIN ALLADAYE CONVOKED ME TO COME TO MINISTRY AT ONCE. WHEN I ARRIVED I WAS SHOWN INT THE MINISTER'S OFFICE IMMEDIATELY. MIN WAS WAITING WITH DIRGEN OF FOREIGN MINISTRY LEONARD ADJIN. IN SHARP CONTRAST WITH THE CONFRONTATIONS WITH THE AMB OVER PAST TWO WEEKS, MEETING WAS MARKED BY EXTREME CORDIALITY AND APPARENT COMPREHENSION. THE INTERVIEW WITH THE MIN PROBABLY RESULTED FROM EARLIER SESSION I HAD WITH DIR FOR WESTERN EUROPE/NORTH AMERICA CAKPO. CAKPO HAD SAID MIN WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED BY THE AMB'S EARLY CONFIDENTIAL

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DEPARTURE. HE HAD VERY MUCH WANTED TO TALK WITH HIM AGAIN

BEFORE HIS RETURN TO WASHINGTON. I SAID I WOULD BE AT THE MINISTER'S DISPOSITION AND WOULD GLADLY PASS ON TO THE AMB ANYTHING THE MIN WISHED.

2. MIN BEGAN BY NOTING HIS SURPRISE THAT THE AMB HAD LEFT SO QUICKLY. OBVIOUSLY FISHING, HE WONDERED WHY THE AMB HAD TAKEN HIS ENTIRE FAMILY WITH HIM. (THE EMBASSY HAD NOT RPT NOT INFORMED THE GPRB THAT THE AMB WAS TAKING HIS SONS WITH HIM.) I EXPLAINED THAT MRS ENGLE HAD RETURNED TO THE US SEVERAL WEEKS AGO FOR AN OPERATION AND THE AMB COULD NOT LEAVE HIS TWO SONS HERE ALONE. HE MADE NO FURTHER COMMENT ON THE AMB'S DEPARTURE, NOR DID HE INQUIRE ABOUT HIS RETURN TO COTONOU.

3. I EXPLAINED THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AMB'S RAPID DEPARTURE AND REVIEWED THE DEPSEC'S PROTEST TO AMB BOYA. ALLADAYE HAS NOT YET HEARD FROM BOYA. HE DENIED ANY MALEVOLENT INTENTION OF THE SESSION WITH THE AMB LAST THURSDAY WHICH HE INSISTED WAS ONLY A WORKING SESSION (SEANCE DE TRAVAIL). HE CLAIMED THAT PRES KEREKOU WAS CONFUSED BY HAVING BEEN CONFRONTED WITH OUR AIDE-MEMOIRE WITHOUT HAVING BEEN FIRST BRIEFED ON IT BY THE FORNMIN. THE PRES HAD ORDERED THE "WORKING SESSION" TO DETERMINE WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT. ALLADYE DENIED ANY DISCOURTESY OR AFFRONT TO OUR AMB. IN MY EARLIER MEETING, CAKPO, EITHER EMBARRASSED OR FRIGHTENED, REFUSED TO DISCUSS THE SESSION SAYING THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO OBTAIN HIS MINISTER'S PERMISSION.

4. I MENTIONED EACH OF THE SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE AMB'S MEETING WHICH WE FOUND OBJECTIONABLE. WHEN I REACHED THE POINT ABOUT THE LACK OF COMMON COURTESY SHOWN BY THE REFUSAL OF THE TWO MYSTERIOUS INQUISITORS TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES, I SUGGESTED IT MIGHT HELP CLEAR THE AIR IF I COULD INFORM THE AMB AND MY GOVT WHO THEY WERE. ALLADAYE WOULD GO NO FURTHER THAN TO SAY THEY WERE "TWO CLOSE COLLABORATORS OF THE PRESIDENT, WHOM THE LATTER ORDERED TO ATTEND." CAKPO WOULD NOT EVEN GIVE THAT MUCH INFO. ALLADAYE CLAIMED HE DID NOT REALIZE THAT IT WAS IMPROPER TO ASK AN AMB TO SIGN A MINUTES OF A MEETING (PROCES-VERBALE) BUT NOW HE HAS BEEN ENLIGHTENED.

5. WHEN WE FINISHED DISCUSSING THOSE ASPECTS OF THE AMB'S
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GRILLING WHICH WE CONSIDERED AFFRONTS TO THE USG, ALLADAYE ASKED, "WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?" I REPLIED THAT OUR RELATIONS WERE CLEARLY NOW AT THE LOWEST POINT THEY HAVE EVER BEEN. THERE WERE A WHOLE SERIES OF PROBLEMS BETWEEN US, ALL OF WHICH

HE KNEW WELL FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS WITH THE AMB, (I THEN QUICKLY ENUMERATED THEM AGAIN FOR HIM). I TOLD THE MIN THAT TAKEN TOGETHER THEY PRESENT A VERY BLEAK PICTURE. NOW IT

WAS NECESSARY TO TAKE THEM ONE BY ONE AND FIND SOLUTIONS.

6. TURNING TO THE ISSUE OF BENIN' STANCE AT THE UN, I SAID THIS WAS THE INITIAL AREA WHERE THE MIN COULD TAKE CORRECTIVE ACTION. AS FAR AS THE US WAS CONCERNED, BENIN HAD AS BAD A RECORD AS ANY COUNTRY. AT THE EMBASSY WE RECEIVED ANNUAL TABULATIONS OF UN VOTES WHICH SHOWED THAT LAST YEAR BENIN OPPOSED THE U.S. ON VERY ISSUE WE CONSIDERED IMPORTANT. IT APPEARED TO THE USG THAT BENIN'S VOTING PATTERN WAS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE THAT IF THE US FAVORED ONE POSITION BENIN MUST OPPOSE IT. ALLADAYE EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT BENIN'S RECORD WAS ALL THAT BAD. I EXPLAINED THAT WHAT WE FOUND MOST INCOMPREHENSIBLE WAS WHY BENIN OPPOSED US ON ISSUES (SUCH AS GUAM, PUERTO RICO ETC) IN WHICH IT HAS ABSOLUTELY NO INTEREST OR EVEN KNOWLEDGE. ALLADAYE REPLIED THAT I COULD REPORT TO MY GOVT THAT HE PROMISES BENIN WILL MODIFY ITS POSITION AND THAT THIS COMING YEAR ITS RECORD WILL NOT BE AS BAD AS LAST YEAR. WE SHOULD COME AND SEE HIM AS ISSUES ARISE AND BE PREPARED TO PRESENT OUR CASE. IF OUR CASE IS GOOD, BENIN WILL NOT OPPOSE US. I SAID I HOPED WHEN WE DISCUSS CASES, WE CAN BASE THESE DISCUSSIONS ON FACTS AND NOT, AS HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE IN THE PAST, HAVE TO FIGHT FABRICATIONS PROVIDED BENIN BY GOVTS UNFRIENDLY TO THE US. HE AGREED AND TO MY SURPRISE VOLUNTEERED THAT WE SHOULD BEGIN VERY SOON. AFTER ALL, HE SAID, BENIN IS NOW ON THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL AND IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING SOON, WE WILL CONTINUALLY BE FEUDING (ON VA SE BAGARRER TOUS LE TEMPS).

7. NOWHERE IN OUR CONVERSATIONS DID THE MIN MAKE ANY COMPARISON BETWEEN OUR AMB OR HIS PREDECESSOR OR IN ANY OTHER WAY SIGNAL BENIN'S DISSATISFACTION WITH HIM. HOWEVER, CAKPO HAD HARPED ON THE CONTENTION THAT OUR AMB'S AIM WAS TO CAUSE TROUBLE BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES AND THAT HE HAD ACHIEVED CONFIDENTIAL

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HIS GOAL. REPEATED EFFORTS TO DISSUADE HIM FROM THIS POSITION AND TO SHOW WHAT THE AMB HAD DONE FOR BENIN WERE TO NO AVAIL.

8. COMMENT: CAKPO MUST HAVE GOTTEN THE WORD TO HIS MIN, BASED ON OUR CONVERSATION, ON THE EXTENT OF THE USG'S DISPLEASURE OVER THE TREATMENT OF THE AMB. THIS HAS FRIGHTENED THE GPRB (OR AT LEAST THE FORNMINISTRY) AND IT HAS AWAKENED TO THE FACT THAT THE GPRB HAS GONE TOO FAR. CAKPO'S REFUSAL TO DISCUSS THE SESSION AND SUBSEQUENT INDICATIONS FROM OTHER FORNMINISTRY OFFICERS INDICATE THAT ALLADAYE'S DENIAL IS BUT A WEAK ATTEMPT AT COVERING UP. ALLADAYE IS NOW SCURRYING TO MEND FENCES. WHAT STILL MYSTIFIES US IS THE INSISTENT SECRECY ABOUT THE TWO POLITBUREAU MEMBERS WHO INTERROGATE AMB ENGLE. WHILE ALLADAYE CONSISTENTLY DENIED ANY MALEVOLENCE, WHICH THERE CLEARLY WAS, AND REGRETTED THE AMB HAD INTERPRETED THE MEETING THE WAY

HE DID, THE MINISTER STOPPED SHORT OF ANY SORT OF APOLOGY.

9. NEEDLESS TO SAY, WE REMAIN SKPETICAL ABOUT ALLADAYE'S
PROMISES OF A MODIFICATION OF BENIN'S POSTURE AT THE UN. EVEN
IF HE IS SINCERE HIS POLITICAL MASTERS MAY PREVENT HIM FROM
DELIVERING. WE SHOULD SEEK THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY TO PUT HIM
TO THE TEST. RECOMMEND THAT DEPT SELECT UPCOMING UN ISSUE
IN WHICH IT IS CLEAR BENIN HAS NO DIRECT INTEREST AND SUPPLY
US WITH COMPLETE BACKGROUND TO USE IN SEEKING BENIN'S SUPPORT
OR AT LEAST ITS MEUTRALITY.
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